

Iowa Site Inventory Form

State Historic Preservation Office

(January 2016)

State Inventory Number: 38-00346 ☒ New ☐ Supplemental

9-Digit SHPO Review & Compliance (R&C) Number: _____

☐ Non-extant Year: _____

Read the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions carefully, to ensure accuracy and completeness before completing this form. The instructions are available on our website.

• Property Name

A) Historic name: Masonic Block

B) Other names: Hawkeye Block; Stark Building; J.C. Penney's

• Location

A) Street address: 707-709 G Avenue

B) City or town: Grundy Center (☐ Vicinity) County: Grundy

C) Legal description:

Rural: Township Name: _____ Township No.: _____ Range No.: _____ Section: _____ Qtr: _____ of Qtr: _____

Urban: Subdivision: O.P. Block(s): 25 Lot(s): Part of 9

• Classification

A) Property category: *Check only one*

- ☒ Building(s)
☐ District
☐ Site
☐ Structure
☐ Object

B) Number of resources (within property):

If eligible property, enter number of:

Contributing Noncontributing

1 Buildings _____
_____ Sites _____
_____ Structures _____
_____ Objects _____

1 Total _____

If non-eligible property, enter number of:

_____ Buildings
_____ Sites
_____ Structures
_____ Objects

_____ Total

C) For properties listed in the National Register:

National Register status: ☐ Listed ☐ De-listed ☐ NHL ☐ NPS DOE

D) For properties within a historic district:

- ☐ Property contributes to a National Register or local certified historic district.
☒ Property contributes to a potential historic district, based on professional historic/architectural survey and evaluation.
☐ Property *does not* contribute to the historic district in which it is located.

Historic district name: Grundy Center Commercial Historic District Historic district site inventory number: 38-00318

E) Name of related project report or multiple property study, if applicable:

MPD title

Historical Architectural Data Base #

• Function or Use *Enter categories (codes and terms) from the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions*

A) Historic functions

02E03 COMMERCE/TRADE/dry goods

02E11 COMMERCE/TRADE/grocery

03 SOCIAL/meeting hall

B) Current functions

02A COMMERCE/TRADE/business

70 VACANT/NOT IN USE

03 SOCIAL/meeting hall

• Description *Enter categories (codes and terms) from the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions*

A) Architectural classification

05 LATE VICTORIAN

B) Materials

Foundation (visible exterior): _____

Walls (visible exterior): 03 BRICK

Roof: _____

Other: _____

C) Narrative description ☒ SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED

• **Statement of Significance**

A) Applicable National Register Criteria: *Mark your opinion of eligibility after applying relevant National Register criteria*

Criterion A: Property is associated with significant events.

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ More research recommended

Criterion B: Property is associated with the lives of significant persons.

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ More research recommended

Criterion C: Property has distinctive architectural characteristics.

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ More research recommended

Criterion D: Property yields significant information in archaeology/history.

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ More research recommended

B) Special criteria considerations: *Mark any special considerations; leave blank if none*

☐ A: Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ E: A reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ B: Removed from its original location.

☐ F: A commemorative property.

☐ C: A birthplace or grave.

☐ G: Property less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

☐ D: A cemetery

C) Areas of significance

Enter categories from instructions

02 ARCHITECTURE

D) Period(s) of significance

1884-1963

05 COMMERCE

E) Significant dates

Construction date

1884 ☐ *check if circa or estimated date*

Other dates, including renovations

1926

F) Significant person

Complete if Criterion B is marked above

G) Cultural affiliation

Complete if Criterion D is marked above

H) Architect/Builder

Architect

Builder/contractor

I) Narrative statement of significance ☒ *SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED*

• **Bibliography** ☒ *See continuation sheets for the list research sources used in preparing this form*

• **Geographic Data** *Optional UTM references* ☒ *See continuation sheet for additional UTM or comments*

Zone	Easting	Northing	NAD	Zone	Easting	Northing	NAD
1				2			
3				4			

• **Form Preparation**

Name and Title: Alexa McDowell/Architectural Historian Date: May 5, 2020

Organization/firm: AKAY Consulting E-mail: alexa@akayconsulting.com

Street address: 4252 Oakland Avenue Telephone: 515-491-5432

City or Town: Minneapolis State: IA Zip code: 55407

• **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION** *Submit the following items with the completed form*

A) For all properties, attach the following, as specified in the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions:

1. **Map** of property's location within the community.

2. **Glossy color 4x6 photos labeled** on back with property/building name, address, date taken, view shown, and unique photo number.

3. **Photo key showing each photo number on a map and/or floor plan, using arrows next to each photo number to indicate the location and directional view of each photograph.**

4. **Site plan** of buildings/structures on site, identifying boundaries, public roads, and building/structure footprints.

B) For State Historic Tax Credit Part 1 Applications, historic districts and farmsteads, and barns:

See lists of special requirements and attachments in the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Use Only Below This Line

The SHPO has reviewed the Site Inventory and concurs with above survey opinion on National Register eligibility:

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ More research recommended

☐ *This is a locally designated property or part of a locally designated district.*

Comments: _____

SHPO authorized signature: _____

Date: _____

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Property Description

The Masonic Block is located on the north side of G Avenue, directly north of the Grundy County courthouse. The building is located mid-block in a line of contiguously located commercial buildings that are representative of a variety of construction dates and architectural styles, spanning the late 19th century through the mid-20th century.

Built in 1884 as the Hawkeye Block and then remodeled in 1926 and 1950 by the Masons, the Masonic Block is a two-story, brick building with a mix of stylistic elements indicative of Late Victorian era commercial buildings. The 46- by 100-ft. building stretches north from G Avenue to the alley.

The building façade (south elevation) features two storefronts arranged around an entrance to the upper story and a three-bay arrangement of the upper story. The entrance is located one-step above grade; the step appears to be limestone. The opening is framed by iron, engaged columns (the column on the east is covered by non-historic materials associated with the east storefront) with a fluted face. The door is recessed some 3-feet, with the side walls and ceiling sheathed in wood. The door is a non-historic replacement (likely post-dates the period of significance) and the wood-frame, glazed transom is retained.

The east storefront is arranged with a recessed entrance on the east and the glazed display area extending west to meet the center entrance. The storefront likely dates to the 1950s era renovation – the chrome finish, steel framing of the entrance door, and storefront points to that period. A structural post located just inside the display area indicates that the configuration of the storefront was modified from the original (which was likely similar to the configuration retained in the west storefront). The east storefront transom area, bulkhead and east sidewall of the recessed entrance are sheathed in a non-historic material (perhaps wood). The height of the transom area suggests the possibility that the historic, glazed transom may be retained behind the non-historic materials. This finish extends to cover the transom area over the center entrance to the upper story.

The west storefront retains a configuration that, if not original, was in place by the early 19th century. The early character of the storefront is seen in the stepped footprint of the display windows, the deep transom, and the faux-coffered ceiling. The display windows are set in a wood frame and retain the original, interior structural posts. The entrance to the store is deeply recessed (approximately 6-feet) and set on-center. The single-leaf door retains the original wood frame and transom; the door itself is steel framed and fully glazed. Side lights are integral to the storefront. The storefront bulkhead is sheathed in a non-historic finish, as is the storefront transom area. The existence of the historic transom is undetermined.

The upper story is visually defined by the masonry finish, level and quality of decorative brickwork, details in the window openings, and elaborate cornice. The upper story is finished in a red, smooth-faced brick with minimal variation in tone. The brick is laid in a running bond with butter joints. Brick piers provide the organizational framework dividing the upper elevation into three primary bays. The center bay features

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a single window opening, decorative brickwork, and the raised parapet of the cornice. The flanking piers are each punctuated by a large window configuration, with a brickwork and cornice termination.

The fenestration is retained in very good condition despite replacement of the windows. In the center bay, a single opening is tall and narrow with a slightly arched header. The opening retains the original wood frame, the head of which is curved, but the window head is flat. The opening is fitted with an undersized window surmounted by a louvered insert and retains a simple stone sill. A window hood is created using a single course of bricks that extend from the wall plane in a curved form and terminate with a return. A second course of bricks are set within the hood in a dentil pattern.

The window configuration located in each of the flanking bays is comprised of three, tall and narrow windows, a single transom over the center window, and molded spandrels over the outer windows. This configuration is set within a wide opening with a curved head and stone sill. Brick hoods match that over the center window, though they are more curved to follow the greater curve of the openings and wider to extend the full width of the larger opening. The openings retain the original wood frame, including the mullions between the trio of windows, a ledge molding over the center window, and the spandrels with sunburst pattern. The openings are currently filled by vinyl or metal windows in a one-over-one configuration; each with a small, fixed transom plus the small transom over the center window. The transoms have leaded glass designs of Masonic symbols.

The building cornice is comprised of decorative brickwork in the upper wall plane, which gives way to the metal or wood cornice. The brickwork includes heavy corbeled dentils that extend between piers and a panel of brickwork located in the center bay, over the center window. The panel, which is recessed, frames a series of bricks that are laid with the headers extending from the wall plane and alternating with stretchers; the result is a simple box pattern made more dramatic by the play of light and shadow.

The metal or wood cornice is comprised of a raised center section with the bays marked by decorated brackets. Generally, the cornice uses alternating corbeled molding, small brackets, and a dogtooth pattern. In the center bay, the pattern is enhanced by the addition of the building name set in a semi-circular frame with a sunburst pattern in the spandrel. This portion of the cornice has been modified from the original (see historic images). Although the historic views don't provide great detail, clearly the flanking brackets of this bay have been truncated, a large finial has been removed, and the original building nameplate (Hawkeye Block 1884) has been replaced by the post-1926 owner/occupant, Masonic Block A.F.A.M.

Generally, the Masonic Block retains a good level of historic integrity with the alterations made to the storefronts in particular, either dating to the period of significance or reversible. Likewise, the replacement windows could be refitted to versions more compatible with the original character. As a large-scale commercial building with an elevated sense of design character, the building contributes significantly to this Victorian era streetscape.

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Statement of Significance

As established in the district site form, “the potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District is locally significant and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. The potential historic district represents two phases of development. The first phase is associated with Grundy Center’s development as the Grundy County seat of government, an important agricultural market town, and a station and shipping point on the Cedar Rapids & Sioux Falls Branch of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad from the 1879 to c.1920. The second phase of development represents Grundy Center’s adaptation to the automobile, particularly after the route of State Highway 14 routed along G Avenue in 1920 and was paved in 1931, and with the post-World War II modernization and building boom, which gained steam in the late 1940s and culminated in 1963 with the Frederick Furniture front remodel” (Price, 2018).

As stated in the 2018 document, “the potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District displays the building types and architectural details of a cohesive historic district that developed in two phases, from 1879, just after the fire in the 700 block on the north side of G Avenue to c.1920 and from the 1940s to the mid-1960s. The potential district, therefore, exhibits the characteristics, building types, and architectural styles of a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century commercial district, mixed with mid-twentieth-century commercial buildings and historic front remodels” (Price, 2018).

Following these established guidelines for evaluating eligibility, the Masonic Block was evaluated for its ability to contribute to the significance of the historic district under Criterion A, in association with what the 2018 evaluation identified as “Early Development and the Impact of the Railroad on Town Development, 1855-1910s” and/or under Criterion C as a resource that demonstrates the “characteristics, building types, and architectural styles of a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century commercial district.” With a construction date of 1884, the building falls within the district’s period of significance. Research indicates the building was renovated in 1926 with storefronts renovated in the mid-20th century (within the period of significance) and as such, the historic alterations can be viewed as part of the historic fabric. Despite the alterations, the building retains a level of historic integrity representative of the original Late Victorian era construction with upper story elements, including a prominent cornice and character-defining fenestration retained. As a result, the Masonic Block is considered a contributing resource under Criterion C. Further, as a resource dating to the early era of commercial development, the building contributes to our understanding of the community’s commercial evolution and is significant in that association. As a result, despite the exterior alterations, the Masonic Block is counted a contributing resource to the potential historic district under Criterion A.

The period of significance for the potential Grundy Center Commercial Historic District has been preliminarily established as 1879 to 1963, from the year the Central Block was built right after the 1879 fire, to 1963, the year that Frederick Furniture remodeled their façade, the culmination of the post-World War II commercial district building boom (Price, 2018). Constructed in 1884 and remodeled in 1926 and 1950, the Masonic Block fits firmly within that period of significance.

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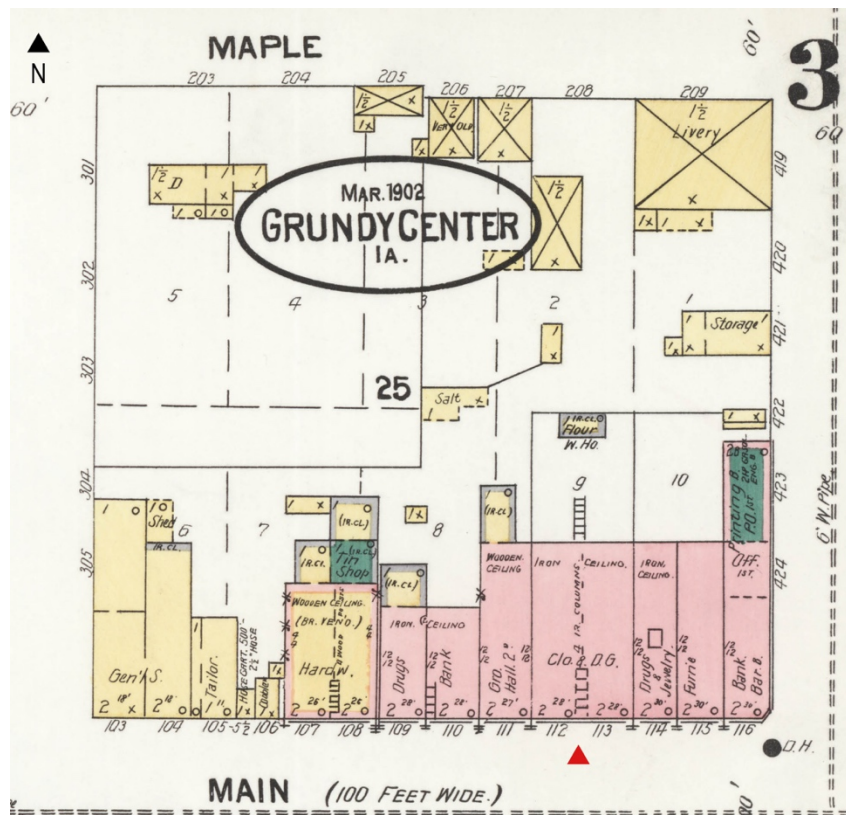
Grundy
County
Grundy Center
City

Historical Background

The city's street numbering system evolved as the town grew. The 1894 fire insurance map notes that the primary east-west roadway was Main Street (now G Avenue) with north-south streets numbered Fourth Street (now 7th Street), Third Street (now 6th Street), and Second Street (now 5th Street). The method of numbering buildings was also revised, with changes made between issuance of the 1902 and 1911 fire insurance maps and again between the 1916 and 1928 fire insurance maps. By 1928 the present system of street names and building numbers was in place.

The lot upon which the Masonic Block is sited was first recorded as developed in 1868 by the centennial history, at which time R.W. Pitkin Grocery and a harness shop occupied two wood-frame structures on the site. There are no records indicating what was done with the wood frame building when the Hawkeye Block was constructed. Likely they were razed to make way for the new brick building.

Figure 01. Fire Insurance Map – 1894



(Library of Congress Sanborn Map Collection. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/?fa=location:iowa>. Retrieved 03/15/2019.)

The location of the Masonic Block is indicated by a red arrowhead.

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The centennial history notes that the Masonic Block was built in 1884 by George Stark to house the “Stark Brothers Dry Goods, Clothing, Boots, Shoes, and Groceries” and that the Masons leased space in the building in 1885, using the east half of the upper story for their meetings. The 1894 fire insurance map places a “dry goods & boots & shoes” in the east storefront and a “clothing store & boots & shoes” in the west storefront with a tailor at the rear of the west storefront (Figure 01).

The Masons purchased the entire building in 1926; it is very likely the cornice was altered at that time, with the “Hawkeye Block 1884” replaced by “Masonic Block A.F.A.M.” which is retained today. The centennial history also notes the second story was renovated in 1950. Although the specifics of that work are unknown, it seems possible that the project also included alterations of the storefronts, which today have some elements (e.g. steel frame doors) indicative of the mid-20th century.

Between construction of this building in 1884 and 1945 the building’s storefronts were occupied by a variety of clothing, dry goods, and grocery stores. In 1925 J.C. Penney moved into the west storefront, remaining there through 1976. In 1957 the east storefront began a long tenancy by a variety of auto parts stores. There is no record of occupancy from 1976-2018 when the district evaluation was completed. In 2017 the west storefront was vacant with the east storefront occupied by Napa Auto Parts. As of 2019, the Masonic Lodge maintains occupancy of the second floor.

Table 01. Occupancy Table

Year	Business		Source	Notes
1868	R.W. Pitkin Grocery		Centennial	
	Harness Shop			
1880's	Dry Goods Store		Centennial	
1884	Stark Brothers, Dry Goods, Clothing Boots, Shoes and Groceries	Stark Brothers, Dry Goods, Clothing Boots, Shoes and Groceries	Centennial	Construction Date: George N. Stark
1885	707 ½: Masonic Hall		Centennial	
1888	709 ½: The Argus Newspaper			
1890	Stark and Herb Bigelow		Centennial	
1892	Bigelow and Bigelow	Bigelow and Bigelow	Centennial	
1894	Dry Goods and Boots and Shoes	Clothing and Boots and Shoes	Sanborn	
1897	Assessor Construction Date		Assessor	
1902	Clothing and Dry Goods	Clothing and Dry Goods	Sanborn	
1909-1923	709 ½: J.R. Albright, Dentist		Centennial	
1911	Kessler and Bigelow		Centennial	
	Dry Goods	Clothing	Sanborn	

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1914	Clothing Store, Leon Bigelow		Centennial	
1916	J.R. Bossman Grocery	Grundy Mercantile Company	Centennial	
	Dry Goods	Clothing	Sanborn	
1919		Phil Liebsohn Company	Centennial	
1922		F. M. Keiter	Centennial	
1926	David Selzer Shoe Store		Centennial	
1927		Zender and Caldwell Clothing Store	Centennial	
1929	Gamble Store		Centennial	
		J.C. Penney, INC.	Centennial	
1935	Gambles, Don Porter	J.C. Penney, INC.	Centennial	
1949	Ralph J. Pabst	J.C. Penney, INC.	Centennial	
1957	Western Auto Associates, Willard Fairchild	J.C. Penney, INC.	Centennial	
1976	Grundy Center Auto Parts	J.C. Penney, INC.	Centennial	
2017	Napa Auto Parts	Vacant	2017 Photographs	
2019	Vacant	Napa Auto Parts	2019 Photographs	
		Masonic Meeting Hall		

Early Development and the Impact of the Railroad on Town Development, 1855-1900s

The following paragraphs are excerpted from Price's 2018 survey and evaluation of the potential historic district, which provide the historical context for evaluating resources constructed during the period from 1855-1900s.

The town of Grundy Center was platted more than two decades before the railroad arrived. In 1855, Thomas G. Copp became the town's first resident. According to William G. Kerr's historical account of the town's founding and early development in the Grundy Register Centennial Edition, after a long trek across the central Iowa prairie in search of a new home.

The second resident was John Overdear. Together, Copp and Overdear made the first town plat of Grundy Center in 1856. The original plat of Grundy Center contained 35 blocks, with Block 18 at the center dedicated to a public square and the site for the proposed county courthouse. The east-west avenues were Pine, Maple, Main, Chestnut, Elm, and Locust. The north-south streets were First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth. (All avenue names were changed to letters of the alphabet in the mid-twentieth century – Main Street became G Avenue – and the numbered streets were renumbered beginning further east in newer additions). The commercial district developed east and north of the public square, in

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Blocks 17, 24, 25, 26, and 27. In 1857, the first courthouse was constructed. It was a wooden octagon-shaped building known locally as “the cheesebox.” The current courthouse was begun in 1891 and completed in 1893. In 1857, Copp built the town’s first hotel on the northwest corner of the block just east of the courthouse (south side of G Avenue). The town’s first store, built in 1860, was located in that block as well.

Prior to the railroad, the town grew slowly. By 1875, only about a dozen buildings had been erected in Grundy Center on the town lots north and east of the courthouse square. Nearly all of them were one or two-story wood false-front store buildings mixed with a few residences. When Grundy Center incorporated in April 1877, the town had 437 inhabitants. The first town election was held a month later.

Just after Grundy Center’s incorporation, in the fall of 1877, the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railroad reached the town and citizens planned a celebration. The railroad was built through Grundy Center approximately 6 blocks north of the commercial district, which paralleled Depot Street (today A Avenue) in its southeast-northwest trajectory. A building boom had begun that year in anticipation of the railroad. In the spring, C.W. Reynolds erected a frame building, and Daniel Kerr and Charles Campbell began construction on the two-story, double brick veneered Campbell Block. Holt and Beckman put up a two-story frame building for a bank, and Dr. E.A. Crouse, W.C. Williams, and G.C. Shuler built a frame building called the Grundy County Bank. The Sargent Brothers built a two-story building, and R.T. Miller and the Elliott Bros. erected a building known as City Hall Block on the west end of the business district. With so many wood frame commercial buildings built in two years, the Grundy Center business district resembled a railroad boom town.

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Bibliography

“Go Walkabout Grundy: The Liberty Tour.” Booklet for the Felix Grundy Festival, 1991. Available at the Grundy County Historical Society Museum.

“Go Walkabout Grundy: The Orion Tour.” Booklet for the Felix Grundy Festival, 1992. Available at the Grundy County Historical Society Museum.

Grundy Center: A Centennial Portrait, 1977. Grundy Center, IA: Grundy Center Area Centennial, Inc., 1977.

Price, Jennifer A. “Grundy Center Commercial Historic District.” Iowa Site Inventory Form, 2018.

Grundy County Historical Society Museum. Grundy Center, Iowa.

Newspapers

The Grundy Republican. “A Live Town.” January 03, 1895.

The Grundy Republican. Advertisement for Jacobs Bros. January 03, 1895.

The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette, “Grundy Center News: Grundy Center experiencing quite a boom in building.” June 09, 1900.

The Grundy Republican. Advertisement for Jacobs & Co. November 11, 1900.

The Grundy Republican. “Historical Sketch. Early Days of Grundy County and Grundy Center.” November 11, 1900.

The Grundy Register, Diamond Jubilee Edition. Misc. advertisements for local businesses. June 05, 1952.

Online Resources

Grundy County Assessor. <https://beacon.schneidercorp.com>. Retrieved 03/26/2019.

Library of Congress Sanborn Map Collection. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/?fa=location:iowa>. Retrieved 03/15/2019.

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Geographic Data

Latitude/Longitude: NW 42.361870/-92.773100
NE 42.361870/-92.772930
SE 42.361643/-92.772930
SW 42.361643/-92.773100

Additional Information

01. Assessor's Parcel Map – 2019



(Source: <https://beacon.schneidercorp.com>. Retrieved 03/20/2019.)

The location of the resource is indicated in YELLOW. The building is located on the east 46-ft. of Lot 9 in Block 25 of the Original Plat.

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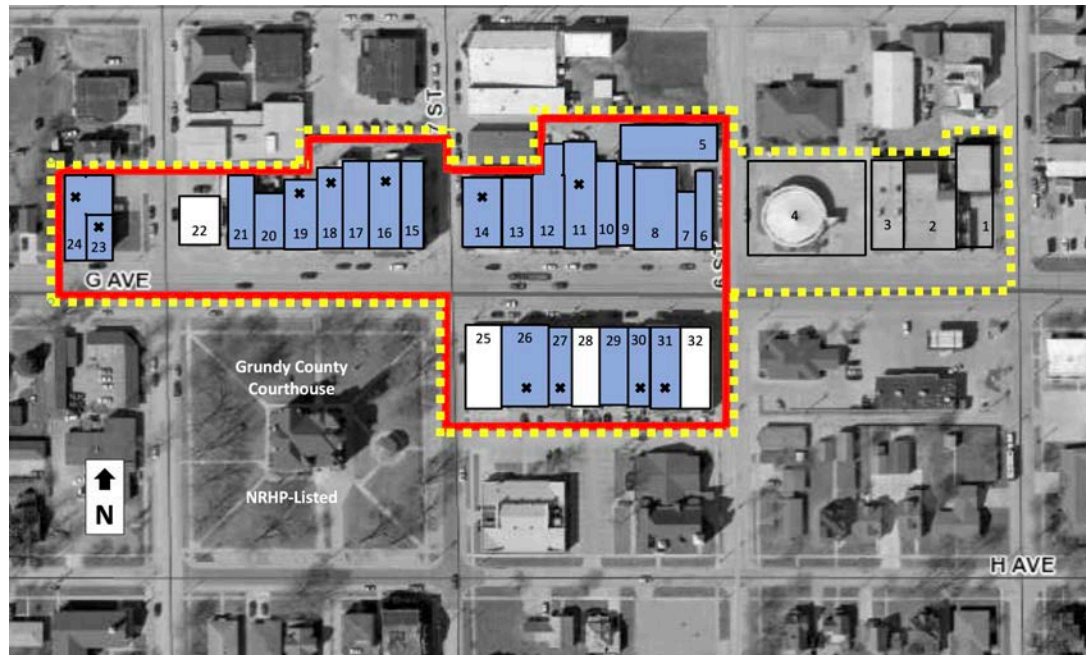
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02. Potential District Boundary Map – 2018



(Source: Jennifer Price, "Grundy Center Commercial Historic District," Iowa Site Form, 2018.)

The red outline indicates the proposed district boundaries. The Masonic Block is noted as building '17'.

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Additional Information: Photographs (06/08/2019)

01. Streetscape View: Looking NW along G Avenue from 7th Street



02. Streetscape View: Looking NE along G Avenue from 8th Street



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03. View of façade (south), looking north across G Avenue



04. Detail of west storefront



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05. Detail of east storefront



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06. Detail of upper story fenestration and masonry



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07. Detail of upper story fenestration and masonry



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08. Detail of building cornice with building nameplate



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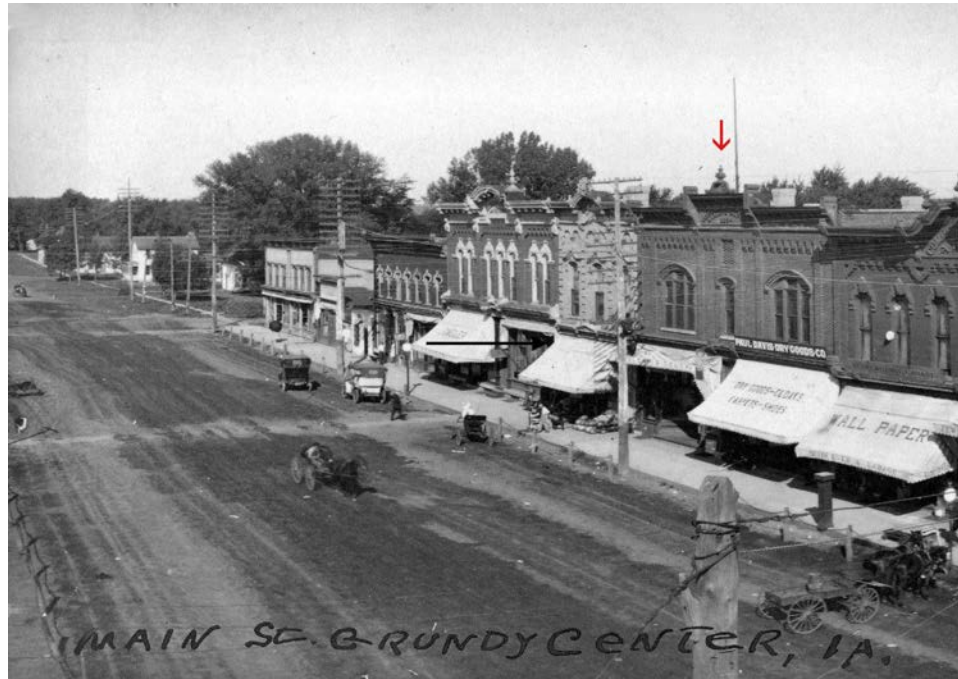
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Additional Information: Historic Images

01. View of streetscape looking NW across G Avenue – ca.1905



(Source: Grundy County Historical Society.)

The location of the Hawkeye Block is indicated. At this time the cornice retained the original name.

02. Enlargement of above showing original cornice



This image documents the early appearance of the center portion of the building cornice. When compared with the current cornice, alterations are obvious, including the change of the building name.

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03. View of streetscape looking west along G Ave from 7th St. – ca.1935



(Source: Grundy County Historical Society.)

04. View of streetscape looking NE from near 8th Street – ca.1935



(Source: Grundy County Historical Society.)